Our Heroes

Tasmania's Victoria Cross Recipients

"For Valour"

With the compliments of Guy Barnett, Liberal Senator for Tasmania

Senator Guy Barnett pictured at the Australian War Memorial's Hall of Valour, which features the photographs of all 96 Australian Victoria Cross recipients, including Tasmania's 13 recipients.

"For Valour"

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Introduction from Senator Guy Barnett

This booklet has been produced in an endeavour to foster the memory of young Tasmanians who gave their lives by special deeds of valour. They acted selflessly in serving their country, leaving behind family and risking or sacrificing their lives for our freedom, so that we may have a better life.

Of the 96 Australians awarded the Victoria Cross, Tasmania has the distinction of being the home state of 13, including the first two Australian born soldiers to receive the honour, Lieutenant Guy Wylly and Trooper John Bisdee. This is the highest proportion for any state or territory.

The Victoria Cross is a special honour. It is the highest award for acts of bravery during wartime, and still exists today in Australia known as the Australian Victoria Cross. No Australian has been awarded this medal since the Vietnam War.

It is difficult for us to conceive and imagine the acts carried out by the typical Tasmanian VC. Most were young men, still in their twenties, who had spent their lives in the town they were born, before volunteering to serve their country in distant and unfamiliar parts of the world.

Becoming a soldier was in itself a strange and intimidating adventure. Tasmania's VC winners were usually not career soldiers, but unassuming, young men who gave up their trades and the comforts of home to serve their country at the outset of war.

It is vitally important to our nation that these men be remembered and their deeds commemorated. The Australian Government has contributed $65,000 to the Tasmanian RSL for the construction of 13 plaques across the state in honour of our VC recipients. The Government also dedicated $20,000 to the establishment of the Evandale memorial to Lt Col Harry Murray VC, Australia's most highly decorated soldier, and his statue was unveiled in February 2006 by the Governor General, Major General Michael Jeffery.

In July 2006, after nearly two years of strong representations from the Murray Memorial Committee, the Murray family, the Tasmanian RSL and myself, I was pleased to be informed that the Australian War Memorial now displays a large portrait of Harry Murray VC as part of the Memorial's World War I display.

Many thanks to RSL Tasmania for their support and to the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Australian War Memorial for their valuable research and assistance in the preparation of this booklet. This booklet has been produced on behalf of my Tasmanian Federal Liberal colleagues.

Tony Scott OAM JP
State President, RSL Tasmania Branch

The Victoria Cross is the highest award for acts of bravery in wartime. The interest in the Victoria Cross continues to attract historians, collectors and the general public alike. As the years pass, so the list of surviving recipients grows ever smaller. Thirteen Tasmanians received the Victoria Cross during the Boer War and First World War and they have been honoured with a VC Memorial at the Hobart Cenotaph. The memorial includes soil from the battlefields of France and Belgium and soil from their birthplace. This memorial was built with the support of the Australian and State Governments along with the Hobart City Council after receiving a request from the Tasmanian RSL. Small memorials have also been placed at the schools where these thirteen brave Tasmanians were educated and again the Australian Government funded this project.
LEST WE FORGET.

The Hon Bruce Billson MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence

A history forged in courage. The powerful aura and prestige surrounding the Victoria Cross was recently highlighted when businessman Kerry Stokes paid a world-record price of $1.214 million at auction to acquire the VC earned by Captain Alfred Shout at Gallipoli.

VCs are awarded for the most extraordinary acts of gallantry and valour and in many ways they are in fact priceless. The Australian War Memorial holds the largest publicly accessible collection of VCs in the world with 60, including Captain Shout's which was kindly donated.

While the AWM is an ideal location for their display, the memorial refuses to bid for them when up for sale, because they very much subscribe to that belief that it is impossible to put a true price on them.

Australians have earned 96 of the 1356 VCs ever awarded in Britain and the Commonwealth. Tasmania boasts 13 VC winners, quite a remarkable number. The Australian Government has provided funding to help ensure the wonderful legacy of Tasmania's VC winners is appropriately commemorated.

The installation of memorial plaques in the schools and hometowns of the 13 VC winners is a thoughtful and lasting tribute. Back in February I had the privilege of attending the unveiling of the wonderful statue of VC winner Lieutenant Colonel Harry Murray, our country's most highly decorated war hero, at Evandale.

Tasmania has truly played a significant part in our country's rich VC story; a story forged in the courage and valour of those wonderful soldiers who have the thanks of a grateful nation.

The Victoria Cross

The Victoria Cross (VC) is the highest award for acts of bravery in wartime in the British and Commonwealth armed forces. The award is also available to civilians who commit acts of bravery under military command (this has occurred six times). To be awarded a VC, the act of bravery must be committed **"in the face of the enemy"**. For other acts of bravery, the corresponding award is the George Cross.

The Victoria Cross was instituted by Queen Victoria (pictured right) in 1856, in recognition of acts of bravery during the Crimean War of 1854–1855.

The award originally was not able to be awarded posthumously, or to Indian troops.

Design

The Victoria Cross (pictured below) is designed in the shape of a Maltese Cross 35mm wide, bearing a crown surmounted by a lion, and the inscription "*FOR VALOUR''* . The medal was to have originally been inscribed with the words "*FOR BRAVERY"* but was altered at the request of Queen Victoria, who did not want people to incorrectly believe that only Victoria Cross recipients had been brave in battle.

The reverse side of each Victoria Cross is inscribed with the date of the act of bravery, along with the name, rank and unit of each recipient.

The medal is suspended from a crimson ribbon 38mm wide.

The medal, suspension bar and link weigh about 27g and are cast in bronze, believed to be obtained from the cascabels of two Chinese cannons captured from the Russians during the Crimean War. The same company of jewellers, Hancocks of London, has been responsible for producing every VC awarded since the medal's inception.

During World War I a quarter of all VC awards were posthumous. In World War II and since World War II half of the recipients have survived to receive their award.

Three people have been awarded the Victoria Cross twice. A second Victoria Cross is signified by a bar worn on the suspension ribbon, and as a result, is known as the "Victoria Cross and Bar".

Since the end of the Second World War, the Victoria Cross has only been awarded 13 times, including four awards to Australians in Vietnam.

It has been suggested that the changing nature of war will result in the Victoria Cross being awarded less frequently in the future.

Australian Victoria Cross Recipients
The first Australian to be awarded a Victoria Cross was Captain (later Sir) Neville Howse. Howse was awarded the VC for the rescue of a wounded man on 24th July 1900, while serving as an officer of the NSW Army Medical Corps during the Anglo Boer War. A total of six Australians went on to receive the Victoria Cross for acts of bravery during the Boer War, including two Tasmanians, Trooper John Bisdee and Lieutenant Guy Wylly.

Australia was the first of several Commonwealth nations to create its own VC Award, which is a separate award, but the same as the British award in appearance.

The Australian War Memorial in Canberra is notable for having the largest official collection of Victoria Cross medallions in the world.

The Human Cost of War

The true human cost of war, whether physical or mental, is a sacrifice grossly under-rated and misunderstood.

Australian dead and wounded in the two world wars totalled 286,275. Even during the Vietnam War which was nowhere near the scale of a world war Australia lost 520 lives. At Gallipoli alone we lost 8,700 Australians dead and more than 19,000 wounded in the brief nine month campaign. This number averaged almost 800 dead and wounded each week.

In World War I Australian casualties totalled 215,338, or 4.33% of the Australian population, as at 1914. This was almost three times the number of dead and wounded in World War II (70,937).which represented 1% of the Australian population, as of 1939.

Tasmanian Victoria Cross Memorials

As promised at the 2004 Federal election the Howard Government has provided $72,600 through the Regional Partnerships program for the Tasmanian RSL to have plaques constructed and laid.

This project has seen the establishment of a series of memorial plaques placed in the hometowns or schools of Tasmania's 13 Victoria Cross recipients.

An agreement was reached with the Tasmanian Education Department, the Tasmanian RSL and the Australian Army to have the 13 VC memorials located at the various sites including 11 schools and two Army Barracks.

The locations of the memorials are as follows:

Sergeant Percy Statton - Zeehan Primary School.

Lieutenant Alfred Gaby - Scottsdale Primary School.

Sergeant Stanley McDougall - Dover RSL Sub Branch.

Sergeant Lewis McGee - Ross Cenotaph.

Sergeant John Dwyer – Alonnah, Bruny Island

Lt Col Harry Murray – Evandale.

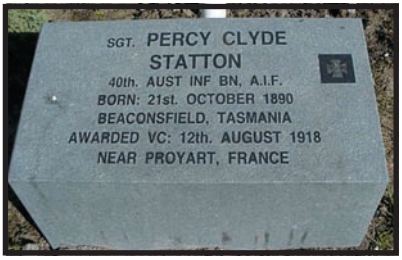
Trooper John Bisdee & ***Lieutenant Guy Wylly*** - The Hutchins School.

Captain Percy Cherry - Huonville Primary School

Sergeant John Whittle - Cygnet Primary School

Corporal Walter Brown - New Norfolk Primary School.

Lance Corporal Sidney Gordon & ***Captain James Newland*** - Hobart Anglesea Barracks Memorial Garden.



Above: The VC Memorial for Sergeant Percy Statton at Zeehan Primary School

The Boer War
1899 - 1902

Five Australians were awarded the Victoria Cross for acts of bravery during the Boer War, including two Tasmanians, Trooper John Bisdee and Lieutenant Guy Wylly, who also have the distinction of being the first Australian born soldiers to be awarded the Victoria Cross.

From the time of its acquisition by Britain during the Napoleonic wars, southern Africa had been shared between British colonies and independent republics of Dutch-Afrikaner settlers, known as Boers. Throughout the nineteenth century the two powers had maintained a wary co-existence, although increasingly the question became whether Britain or the Boers should control southern Africa. The two had already fought an inconclusive war in 1880 (the First Boer War).

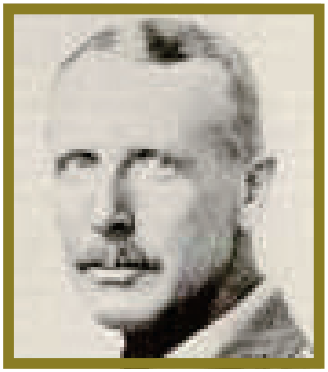
The conflict that eventuated to become the Boer War (or Second Boer War) involved two independent Boer republics within South Africa, The Orange Free State and the South African Republic (also known as the Transvaal Republic) who perceived British interests in South Africa as a threat to their independence.

The discovery of gold and diamonds in the Boer republics in the 1880s intensified rivalry, and British imperial ambition. Boer independence resulted in friction that in 1899 provoked the Boers to attack, in order to forestall what they saw as an impending British conquest.

As part of the British Empire, the Australian colonies offered troops for the war in South Africa. At least 12,000 Australians served in contingents raised by the six colonies or (from 1901) by the new Australian Commonwealth (about a third of men enlisted twice), and many more joined British or South African colonial units in South Africa. At least 600 Australians died in the war, about half from disease and half in action.

Tasmania contributed four contingents of soldiers to serve the British Empire during the course of the Boer War, totalling 558 men. Twenty-two Tasmanians gave their life during the course of the war, 11 were killed in battle or died from wounds received in battle, and another 11 lost their lives to diseases contracted in the squalid conditions under which the men served.

Soldiers from Tasmanian contingents were also awarded four Distinguished Service Orders, and five Distinguished Conduct Medals for services performed during the Boer War. Another three were made Companions of the Order of the Bath.



Trooper John Bisdee

Unit: 1st Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen
Date & Place of Action: 1st September 1900, Warm Bad, Transvaal

John Bisdee was born on 28th September, 1869, at Hutton Park, Melton Mowbray, Tasmania. He attended the Hutchins School in Hobart. After leaving school, he worked on his father's property until enlisting for service in South Africa in April 1900 with the 1st Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen.

In South Africa, Bisdee saw action in both the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, until being wounded and forced to return home. Bisdee returned to South Africa in March 1901 as a lieutenant with the 2nd Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen.

On 1st September 1900, a group of eight Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen including Bisdee, formed an advance scouting party on horseback, under the command of Lieutenant Guy Wylly. For his actions during the following incident, Bisdee became the first Australian-born soldier to be awarded the Victoria Cross:

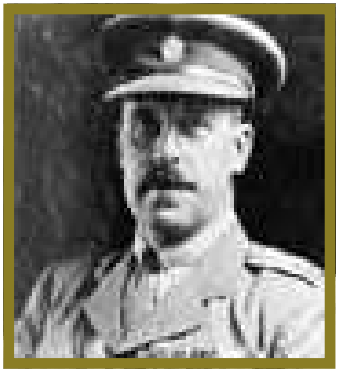
"Bisdee and other members of an advance scouting party were ambushed by Boers in a rocky defile. Six of the party of eight were hit including two officers, Major Brooke and Lieutenant Wylly. Brooke's horse had bolted so Bisdee dismounted, put the officer on his own horse and, despite being seriously wounded, ran alongside, then mounted behind him and withdrew under heavy fire."

Bisdee continued serving in South Africa until the end of the Boer War. On returning to Tasmania, Bisdee resumed farming at Hutton Park, and on 11th April 1904, married Georgina Theodosia Hale.

In 1906 Bisdee returned to service when he joined the 12th Australian Light Horse Regiment, Tasmanian Mounted Infantry. By 1910, Bisdee had risen to the rank of captain when he attended a course of instruction in India. In 1913, he became commanding officer of the 26th Light Horse.

On 26th July 1915, Bisdee joined the AIF and was assigned to the 12th Light Horse, and served in Egypt against the Senussi until receiving a wound in the leg. In March 1916, he was assigned assistant provost marshal at AIF Headquarters in Egypt, then to the ANZAC Mounted Division. In September, he was promoted to major. Bisdee served with the 12th Light Horse throughout 1917. In January 1918, he was appointed assistant provost marshal of the ANZAC Provost Corps. In June 1918, Bisedee was promoted to lieutenant colonel. He was mentioned in dispatches three times. Bisdee was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire in June, 1919. He was discharged from the AIF in May 1920 and returned to his farm in Tasmania.

Lieutenant Guy Wylly



Unit: 1st Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen
Date & Place of Action: 1st September 1900, Warm Bad, Transvaal.

Guy Wylly was born on 17th February 1880 in Hobart, Tasmania. The son of an Indian Army major, Wylly spent part of his childhood in India, before his family returned to Tasmania, settling in Sandy Bay. He attended the Hutchins School in Hobart, but completed his final years at St Peter's College in Adelaide, before returning to Tasmania.

In 1900, Wyllie joined the 1st Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen, and on 26th April, left for South Africa as a lieutenant. On the 1st September 1900, Wylly was part of the same advance scouting party as John Bisdee, and for the following action, was awarded the Victoria Cross:

"Wylly was one of two officers present at the same action as John Bisdee. Wylly, himself wounded, saw that one of his own men, Corporal Brown, was badly wounded in the leg and was dismounted. Wylly, despite his own wound, went to the assistance of Brown. He gave his horse to Brown and, at the risk of being cut off, opened fire from behind some rocks to cover the retreat of the others."

Follwing this incident, Wylly was again wounded before transferring to the South Lancashire Regiment. On 5th December 1900, Wylly was gazetted as a second lieutenant and joined the 2nd Battalion at Jubbulpore, in India.

On 1st October 1902, Wylly transferred to the Indian Army, joining the 46th Punjabis, with whom he served until 1904 when he transferred to the Queen's Own Corps of Guides, and from 1906 to 1909 served as aide-de-camp to Lord Kitchener, Commander-in-Chief, India. In April 1909, Wyllie was promoted to captain.

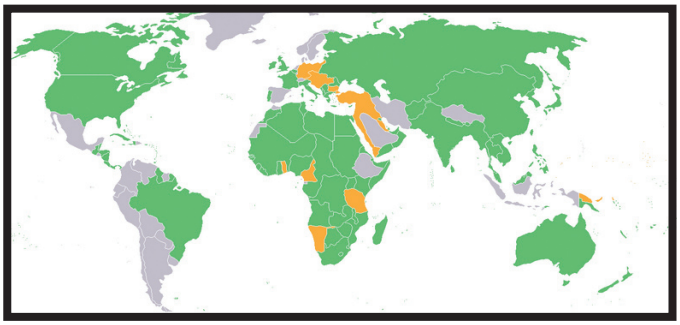
During World War I, Wylly saw considerable service as a staff officer. He was stationed in France with the 1st Indian Calvary Division, until joining the 3rd Australian Division as General Staff Officer II on 10th July 1916. In August of 1915, he had received a serious facial wound. Wyllie was three times mentioned in dispatches and awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his service in France.

Following the war, Wylly returned to service in India. He was made a Companion of the Order of Bath in 1933. Wylly spent his retirement in Britain until his death in 1962 in Camberley, Surrey.

World War I (1914-1918)

Background
The First World War, which officially began in 1914, was the culmination of events within Europe dating back to the beginning of the Twentieth Century, when Europe was dominated by five major powers: **Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary** and **Russia**. These five powers competed with each other to become the biggest and most influential power in both Europe and the rest of the world in a period of empire.

By 1910 these major powers had formed two distinct divisions. **Britain**, **France** and **Russia** formed the **Triple Entente**. **Germany**, **Austria-Hungary** and **Italy** formed the **Triple Alliance**. The **Ottoman Empire** (now Turkey) supported the Triple Alliance against traditional rival Russia.



Left: World Map (1914) showing nations of the Triple Entente and colonies in green and nations of the Triple Alliance and colonies in orange. Grey shows neutral nations.

Outbreak
On 28th June 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, was assassinated in Sarajevo, prompting Austria to declare war with Serbia in an attempt to cement Austrian power over the Balkans. Russia responded by counter attacking Austria – triggering the end of peace between the two alliances.

***World* War**
When German forces invaded neutral Belgium in order to attack France, Britain was provoked to declare war on 4th August 1914. All the major European powers were now at war – and so were their empires.

Australia's Involvement
As a member of the British Empire, Australia immediately offered support to Britain in the conflict. In July of 1914, Leader of the Opposition, Andrew Fisher (who became Prime Minister that September), declared that *'Australia will stand behind the Mother country to help defend her to the last man and the last shilling'*. His sentiments reflected the common view of Australians. Most people believed the conflict would be over by Christmas.

During the course of World War I, over 416,000 Australians enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) for overseas service. The AIF was not the regular Australian Army, but a force assembled for the express purpose of overseas service for the duration of the War. *Every man and woman was a volunteer.* Of these volunteers, over 331,000 were sent overseas. The first units of the AIF were formed and combined with New Zealand soldiers to make the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. After initial training in Egypt, Australian and New Zealand soldiers saw their first action on the beaches of Gallipoli, Turkey, landing on 25th April 1915.

Following the Gallipoli landing, Australian and New Zealand soldiers became known as Anzacs. They were renowned for their courage, sacrifice, ingenuity, independence and mateship, but most notably, perseverance in the face of overwhelming odds.

The AIF also served in the Middle East, where the Light Horse, the Australian infantry mounted on horseback, gained notable success.

After Gallipoli, the AIF served predominantly on the Western Front in Belgium and France between April 1916 and November 1918.

The Royal Australian Navy (formed in 1911) and the Australian Flying Corps (formed in 1912) also saw their first action during World War I. The Royal Australian Navy supplied warships for convoys from Australia and in the Mediterranean, as well as contributing in the effort to blockade Germany. The Australian Flying Corps served on both the Western Front and in the Middle East, serving an observer's role, and provided support to the infantry.

By the end of the World War I on 11th November 1918, the lives had been taken of more than 61,000 Australian soldiers, sailors, airmen and nurses. A further 155,000 were wounded, gassed or taken prisoner.

Left: Australian soldiers embark for the frontline.

Gallipoli

Gallipoli was a tragic military outcome. More than 8,700 Australians died, and over 19,000 were wounded. In total, 44,000 allies and 86,000 Turks died. There were more than 130,000 deaths and more than 261,000 casualties during just eight months of battle. Nevertheless, the Anzacs at Gallipoli left a profound legacy that lasts to this day.

The Strategy

By April 1915 the fighting of World War I had continued for eight months. Britain and France had been fighting Germany on the Western Front and Russia had been fighting Germany and Austria-Hungary on the Eastern Front. The Ottoman Empire (ruled from Turkey) was a German ally and a threat to British interests in the Middle East. The aim of the Gallipoli Campaign was to seize the Turkish capital, Constantinople and control the Dardanelles Strait. This would have enabled allied ships to provide supplies to Russia, and possibly may have forced Turkey out of the War. The British and French agreed to land troops on the Gallipoli Peninsula separating Europe from Asia, after ships alone had failed to secure the Dardanelles.

ANZAC Involvement

After completing training in Egypt, the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps was sent to the Gallipoli Peninsula, along with British and French Troops. They landed by sea on 25th April 1915 amongst confusion and misdirection. However, on this day, Australian soldiers established a hold on the steep slopes above the beach while Turkish troops fired down at the invading forces. For most of the eight months leading to the eventual evacuation of allied troops in December 1915, the campaign was locked in a bitter stalemate.

Senator Barnett visited Gallipoli in April 2005 with Mark Barker MHR and the Prime Minister for the 90th Anniversary of the landing at Anzac Cove in Turkey.

Left:
Gallipoli Peninsula, Turkey, 25 April 1915. Troops landing in Anzac Cove.

The Gallipoli Legacy
Despite the Gallipoli campaign's failure to achieve its original goals, it is commonly believed that the Campaign established Australia as a proud and individual nation within the British Empire. At the time Australia was less than 14 years old as a nation, and had never before been united in conflict.

It was at Gallipoli that that the Australian "digger" earned the reputation as a tenacious, brave, steadfast and trustworthy soldier, loyal to his mates and capable of triumph against the harshest odds.

Nine Australians were awarded the Victoria Cross for acts of bravery at Gallipoli.

The Battle of Lone Pine
The Battle of the Lone Pine is possibly one of the most notable battles fought by Australian soldiers. The Battle took place during the Gallipoli campaign. It was the only successful Australian attack against the Turks within the original perimeter of the Anzac Battlefield.

The Battle was a diversionary offensive launched by the 1st Australian Infantry Division of 6 August 1915. Turkish soldiers had cut down all but one of the trees on the ridge to cover their trenches, leaving the landscape to be dominated by a single Allepo Pine (*Pinus halepensi)* which came to be known as Lone Pine.

In the three days of fighting, there were more than 2000 Australian casualies, as well as an estimated 7000 Turkish casualties. Seven Victoria Crosses were awarded for acts of bravery at the Battle of Lone Pine.

The Aleppo Pine in the Australian War Memorial's grounds was planted by HRH The Duke of Gloucester on 24 October 1934. It bears the following inscription:

"After the capture of the Lone Pine ridge in Gallipoli (6 August 1915), an Australian Soldier who had taken part in the attack, in which his brother was killed, found a cone on one of the branches used by the Turks as overhead cover for their trenches, and sent it to his mother. From seed shed by it she raised the tree, which she presented to be planted in the War Memorial grounds in honour of her own and others' sons who fell at Lone Pine."

Yarralumla Nursery in Canberra propagates trees from seed collected from the tree at the Australian War Memorial for use by RSL sub-branches, schools and community groups to commemorate our Australian soldiers.

Lieutenant Colonel Harry Murray
VC, CMG, DSO (and Bar), DCM, CROIX DE GUERRE
1880 - 1966

"Mad Harry Murray"

The most highly decorated soldier in the Australian Army
&
The most highly decorated soldier in the Commonwealth for the First World War

Pictured wearing the ribbons of his four bravery awards

Unit: 13th Battalion
Born: 1st December 1880 at Evandale, Tasmania
Date & Place of Action: 4th-5th February 1917, Guedecourt, France.

"…Harry Murray lived at Evandale. His military career started when, aged 21, he joined the Launceston Artillery as a gunner. Harry Murray served with the Launceston Artillery for six years. His military career went on hold when he moved

to Western Australia, where he described his occupation as a timber cutter or timber getter. He worked a very hard life in the country. In 1914 he was back in uniform. He had joined the 16th Battalion AIF, along with his best mate, Percy Black, a goldminer from Western Australia.

Harry and Percy landed and fought at Gallipoli together. In May 1915 in action at Pope's Hill, they were both awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. As No.1 and No. 2 on a machine gun, they held off a concerted Turkish attack on the rear of the Australian position while the rest of their company was defending the front of the position. Both were wounded during the action. Soon after Harry Murray was promoted to Lance Corporal, three months later he was promoted to Sergeant and commissioned as a Second Lieutenant on the same day. Senator Barnett traced some of Harry Murray's steps and visited Pope's Hill during his visit to Anzac Cove in April 2005.

While he and Percy Black were together they resolved to 'never let the enemy prevent them from carrying out what they set out do'. This resolve was to come to the surface on many later occasions during the war. As an officer, Harry was posted to the 13th Battalion AIF, with which he went to fight in France and there he was soon promoted to captain.

In August 1916 Captain Harry Murray was awarded the Distinguished Service Order when, as a company commander, he stormed Mouquet Farm with 100 men and briefly held part of it from the Germans. The Australians later had to withdraw under intense enemy fire. A later attack with 700 men was unable to repeat Murray's earlier success and it eventually took a force of 3,000 to recapture the position from the Germans. Murray's initial success with only 100 men was later attributed to his ferocious determination and leadership.

It was on 4 and 5 February 1917 that Murray won the Victoria Cross during action which lasted for nearly 48 hours at Gueudecourt. Murray led a force of 140 men in an assault on a position known as Stormy Trench. During the battle he distinguished himself by encouraging his men, setting an example, leading hand-grenade bombing parties, leading bayonet charges, rescuing the wounded and carrying them to safety, crawling out in no-man's-land on reconnaissance, rallying his men and saving the situation by sheer valour. They were forced to withdraw due to the overwhelming enemy firepower, and only 48 of the 140 survived.

Later in April that year, 1917, during a series of assaults on the Hindenburg line at Bullecourt in France, Murray again was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and promoted to major. During action nearby, his mate Major Percy Black was killed in action. The fighting was severe and communications were very difficult. It is interesting to note that also at Bullecourt another distinguished Tasmanian, General Sir John Gellibrand, was commanding the 6th Brigade AIF. By the end of 1917 Murray was commanding his battalion, and in May 1918 was promoted to

lieutenant colonel and posted as commanding officer of the 4th Machine Gun Battalion, which he commanded until the end of the war.

During the last months of the war, he was awarded the Croix de Guerre and, at the end of the war, he was made Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George. He had also been mentioned four times in dispatches in the last two years of the war. Thus, at the end of World War I, Lieutenant Colonel Harry Murray was the most highly decorated soldier of the entire British Empire.

In 1920 he bought an 80,000 acre farm, `Glenlyon', near Richmond in North Queensland. In 1927 he married and started his own family. When hostilities broke out again, he pulled on his uniform once more and from July 1939 to August 1942 commanded the 26th Battalion of the Militia and then held postings in the Volunteer Defence Corps until 1944, when he retired from active duty.

On 7 January 1966 Lieutenant Colonel Harry Murray VC, died in Queensland as the result of a car accident, the most highly decorated Australian soldier, ever..."
Taken from speech to the Senate by Senator Guy Barnett, Monday 29th November, 2004. Full speech available at www.guybarnett.com

Harry Murray's medals, (replicas pictured below) including his Victoria Cross, are held privately by family.

The Murray Memorial Committee

The Murray Memorial Committee, based in Harry Murray's hometown of Evandale, Tasmania, has worked tirelessly to ensure that the memory of Australia's most decorated soldier remains alive. The Committee was formed nearly 10 years ago after receiving an initial grant of $1,500 from the Department of Veteran's Affairs to assist in their efforts.

The Committee has so far established the Murray Memorial Room at Evandale; a museum dedicated to Harry Murray. They were instrumental players in establishing a permanent memorial to Harry Murray at Evandale (picture right). The life size replica statue was unveiled by Governor General Michael Jeffery on 24th February 2006. The Murray Memorial Committee raised over $85,000 for the memorial statue and managed to secure $20,000 in Federal funding and $10,000 in State Government funding for the statue, crafted in solid bronze, by renowned sculptor, Peter Corlett.

The Murray Memorial Committee and Senator Barnett are now considering establishing a memorial in France at the site where Harry Murray earned his Victoria Cross.

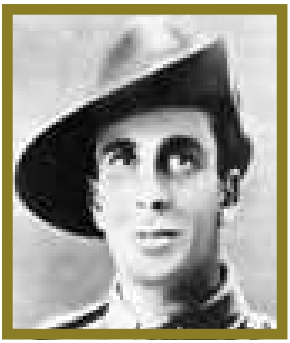
Harry Murray Commemorated at the Australian War Memorial

Above photo courtesy of Australian War Memorial

On 22nd July 2006, Senator Guy Barnett was proud to announce that the Australian War Memorial had agreed to honour Australia's most highly decorated soldier, Harry Murray, by displaying his portrait (pictured left) as part of the Memorial's World War I display.

Senator Barnett, along with RSL Tasmania, and the Murray Memorial Committee, had been campaigning for a more fitting tribute to Harry Murray since February 2005. The previous recognition was a post card size picture in the Memorial's Hall of Valour.

President of the Murray Memorial Committee, Lt. Colonel David von Stieglitz believes it is a well deserved recognition and both the Committee and Murray family are delighted.



Lance Corporal Sidney Gordon

Unit: 41st Battalion, 11th Brigade, 3rd Division
Date & Place of Action: 27th August 1918, Fargny Wood, near Bray, France

Sidney Gordon was born in Launceston on 16th August 1891. He attended school at both Deloraine and Devonport. Upon leaving school, Gordon gained employment as a cooper's machinist in Beaconsfield. Gordon later moved to Townsville, where he enlisted with the AIF on 27th September 1915.

Gordon served with the 41st Battalion in France. He was wounded 5th October 1917. In June 1918 Gordon was appointed a Lance Corporal, and on 8th August that same year was awarded the Military Medal for his conduct on the first day of the Battle of Amiens where he single-handedly attacked a machine gun crew that was holding up his section, killing the crew and capturing the gun.

Eighteen days later, on the night of 26th-27th August 1918, Gordon was awarded the Victoria Cross for the following actions:

"During the day Gordon's battalion was precariously wedged between the banks of the Somme and Fargny Wood. Gordon single-handedly attacked a German machine-gun post that was persistently enfilading the Australian position, killing the gunner and capturing the post, which consisted of one officer and ten men. He then entered Fargny Wood and cleared a trench, capturing twenty-nine prisoners and two machine guns. He took over further trenches, capturing twenty-two prisoners and three machine guns."

Gordon returned to Australia in January 1919 and was demobilised in April. After working a short period as a grocer in Clayfield, Queensland, Gordon began dairy farming at a property near Beaudesert, Queensland. In 1938, Gordon married Caroline Edith Manley, a widow, in Brisbane. They had 2 sons and a daughter together. Gordon had previously married Evelyn Catherine Lonergan in December 1915, with whom he had six children.

During the Second World War, it is believed Gordon served in the Queensland 31st Battalion (the Kennedy Regiment), however, his name is not included on the World War II Roll. Gordon died on 19th October 1963 in Torquay, Queensland, aged seventy-two. Gordon's Victoria Cross is displayed at the Australian War Memorial's Hall of Valour, along with one of the machine guns he captured.

Captain James Newland

Unit: 12th Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 1st Division
Date & Place of Action: 7th-9th and 14th April, 1917, Boursies and Lagnicourt, France

James Newland was born on 22nd August 1881 at Highton, in Geelong. He enlisted with the 4th Battalion, Australian Commonwealth Horse and served in the Boer War in South Africa. On returning to Australia, Newland joined the Victorian artillery, which he served for five years, eventually becoming a permanent member of the instructional staff of the Commonwealth Military Services.

While Newland was stationed in Tasmania, war was declared. Newland joined the AIF on 22nd August 1914 as a regimental quartermaster sergeant of the 12th Battalion. He was sent to Gallipoli, but was wounded shortly after the landing. However, on 22nd May 1915, Newland was commissioned a second lieutenant, promoted to lieutenant on 15th October, and in March 1916, was promoted to captain as his battalion embarked for France.

In France, the 12th Battalion's first major battle was at Pozieres, for which Newland was mentioned in dispatches for conspicuous courage, leadership and organisation. In December 1916 he left his battalion to serve at Headquarters, but was reposted back to the 12th Battalion in February 1917 as commander of A Company for the drive on Bapaume. After an injury in February, Newland returned to the frontline for the April attacks. Newland received the Victoria Cross for actions performed on 7th-9th and 14th of April, as follows:

"In the initial advance on Boursies, which began at 3am, Newland's company was confronted by heavy fire and many casualties were sustained. Newland then successfully led a bombing attack on a ruined mill located about 400 metres short of the village. The attack dislodged the enemy and enabled the company to move on the objective. The Australians then came under heavy shell fire during the day and at 10pm the Germans launched a violent counter-attack. By his personal exertion, disregard of fire and judicious use of reserves, he succeeded in dispersing the counter-attack and holding the position. The Germans broke through the company to the right of A Company, which was being led by Newland, and forced them back. Newland consolidated his men on the very position which Captain Cherry (also a VC winner) had held during the taking of Lagnicourt three weeks earlier. By personal example he encouraged his men to repel the combined attack and although the enemy renewed the attack three or four times Newland's company held out. The 9th Battalion came to reinforce the 12th and the two units combined to counter attack. The line was restored about 11am."

Sergeant Percy Statton

Unit: 40th Battalion, 10th Brigade, 3rd Division
Date & Place of Action: 12th August 1918, Proyart, France.

Percy Statton was born on 21st October 1890, in Beaconsfield, Tasmania. He attended Zeehan State School. When he enlisted on 1st March 1916, Statton was married and was working as a farmer at Tyenna.

Statton was posted to the 40th Battalion, joining it for training in Britain in July 1916. In November 1916 Statton's battalion was posted to France. In May 1916, Statton was appointed lance corporal, and in November was promoted to corporal. On 16th January 1917, Statton was made temporary sergeant, the rank being confirmed on 23rd April 1917.

In June 1917, Statton completed actions under heavy artillery and machine gun fire for which he was awarded the Military Medal. In October Statton was wounded, and in June 1918, Statton was gassed. On 12th August 1918, Statton earned the Victoria Cross for the following actions:

"At about 6pm the advance of the 37th Battalion, on the left flank, was held up by machine-gun fire. A party of thirteen men sent against the first enemy gun was virtually wiped out. Statton supported the 37th's attack with two Lewis guns. When he saw the attack fail he got three men to follow him and, working along the bank of the Chuignes road, got to within seventy-five metres of the strong point. Statton, revolver in hand, then led his men across the seventy-five metres of open ground into the German trench. The party disposed of two guns and their crews and, at the second gun, Statton shot the whole crew, except one, with his revolver. As he had expended all his ammunition he had to grab the remaining German's rifle and use it to bayonet him. The small party then dashed towards the next two guns. The enemy retired only to be killed by the two Lewis guns Statton had sited earlier. Another enemy gun opened fire killing one member of the party and wounding another. Statton and the third man crawled back to their own lines as the 37th moved forward. That night he went out and brought in the wounded man and the body of the other."

Statton was presented his Victoria Cross by King George V on 7th June 1919 at Buckingham Palace. Following his return to Tasmania after being discharged from service on 18th January 1920, Statton worked in the timber industry. In 1934, Statton performed notable rescue work during the Derwent Valley bushfires. Statton went on to serve with the Volunteer Defence Corps during World War II. In later life, Statton lived at Ouse, where he was a local councillor. He died on 7th December, 1959 in Hobart and was accorded a full military funeral.

Lieutenant Alfred Gaby

Unit: 28th Battalion, 7th Brigade, 2nd Division
Date & Place of Action: 8th August 1918, near Villers-Bretonneux

Alfred Gaby was born on 25th January 1892 at Springfield, near Ringarooma. He attended school at Scottsdale until leaving to work on his family's farm. Gaby joined the 12th Infantry Regiment (Launceston Regiment) where he served for three years with the militia while still working for his father.

Prior to the breakout of war, Gaby travelled to Katanning, Western Australia, where he worked as a labourer until enlisting at the Blackboy Hill Camp in January 1916. From here Gaby was posted to the 10th reinforcements to the 28th Battalion. Because of his previous military experience, Gaby was rapidly promoted. He became a sergeant in December 1916, a second lieutenant in April 1917 and lieutenant in September 1917. In October 1917, Gaby was gassed in action.

By August 1918, Gaby, along with the 20th Battalion, was involved in the battle of Amiens. Early in the morning of 8th August, 2000 guns opened fire, commencing the decisive battle, and, 'the black day' of the German Army. That same day, Gaby performed the following action for which he was later awarded the Victoria Cross:

"Gaby, in command of a company, moved with his unit to the east of Villers-Bretonneux towards Card Copse, where unbroken wire entanglements were encountered. Heavy fire from Germans covering a gap in the wire pinned down the Australians. Gaby found a gap in the wire and, single-handedly, approached an enemy strong point while machine gun and rifle fire poured from it. He ran along the parapet, emptied his revolver into the garrison, drove the crews from their machine guns and forced fifty of the enemy to surrender. This resulted in the capture of four machine guns. He then reorganised his company and consolidated the objective".

Three days later, while leading his company along his line of posts under heavy rifle and machine gun fire from the Germans, Gaby was shot by a sniper, killing him instantly.

Gaby was awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously. He was never married. His Victoria Cross is on display at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart.

Sergeant Stanley McDougall

Unit: 47th Battalion, 12th Brigade, 4th Division
Date & Place of Action: 28th March 1918, Dernancourt, France.

Stanley McDougall was born on 23rd July 1889 at Recherche in Tasmania. After finishing school, McDougall became a blacksmith. He was known as an excellent horseman, marksman and bushman. He was also an amateur boxer.

Because of illness, McDougall was unable to enlist with the AIF until 31st August 1915, when he was posted to the 15th Battalion. As a blacksmith, McDougall could have joined a light horse unit, but instead chose to stay with the infantry. On 3rd March 1916, while in Egypt, McDougall began training with the 47th Battalion and, in June, sailed to France with it. On 5th May, McDougall was appointed a lance corporal, promoted to corporal in September, and then temporary sergeant in November. He was confirmed as a sergeant in January 1918.

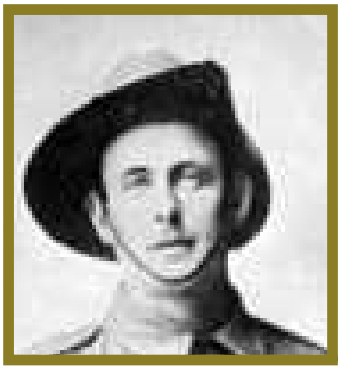
McDougall's battalion was one of the first to move into position to counter the Great German Offensive of 1918. On the night of 27th-28th March, McDougall carried out the following actions for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross:

"McDougall was on watch at a post on the 47th's right flank when he heard approaching enemy. When a Lewis gun team was knocked out by an enemy bomb McDougall snatched up the Lewis gun and attacked two enemy machine-gun teams and killed their crews. He turned one of the captured machine guns on to the enemy, killing several, and routing that wave. Meanwhile, about fifty Germans had crossed the Australian-held railway. McDougall turned his gun on them before they had time to establish themselves behind the battalion. When his ammunition was spent he seized a bayonet and charged, killing three men and an enemy officer who was just about to kill an Australian officer. McDougall then used a Lewis gun on the enemy, killing many, and forcing the surrender of the remaining thirty-three enemy".

Eight days later, McDougall performed another act for which he received the Military Medal. The 47th Battalion was disbanded in May 1918. In August that year, McDougall was presented his Victoria Cross at Windsor Castle by King George V.

McDougall married in 1926. He spent most of his life working for the Tasmanian Forestry Commission, eventually becoming responsible for all the forests in northwest Tasmania. McDougall was also responsible for many outstanding rescues during bushfires, particularly the Fitzgerald fires of 1934. His uniform and the Lewis gun used in the attack are on display in the Hall of Valour of the Australian War Memorial.

Sergeant Lewis McGee



Unit: 40th Battalion, 10th Brigade, 3rd Division
Date & Place of Action: 4th October 1917, near Leper, Belgium

Lewis McGee was born in Campbell Town, Tasmania, on 13th May 1888, the youngest of 11 children.

Prior to the War, McGee was married with an infant daughter and working as an engine driver for the Tasmanian Department of Railways. McGee enlisted on 1st March 1916 at age 27.

After enlisting, McGee was appointed to the 40th Battalion, which he joined for training in Claremont on 1st May 1916, followed by additional training in Britain, before heading to France in late November.

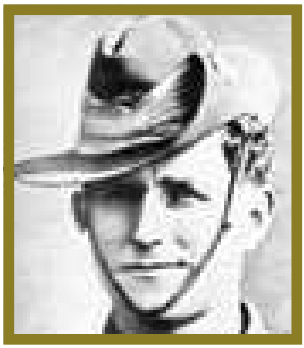
McGee was appointed a lance corporal on 23rd May 1916 while still training in Tasmania, and on 4th December that same year, was promoted to corporal in Armentieres, France. On 12th January 1917, McGee became sergeant.

On 4th October 1917, while McGee's battalion was involved in fighting in Belgium, McGee undertook the following feat, earning him the Victoria Cross:

"During an action McGee's platoon was suffering severely and his company's advance was halted by machine-gun fire from a pillbox. McGee rushed the post armed only with a revolver, shooting some of the crew and capturing the rest, and enabling the advance to proceed. He reorganised the remnants of his platoon and led them through the rest of the advance."

McGee was acting Company Sergeant Major, when he was killed in action during the second battle of Passchendaele, at Augustus Wood, on the morning of the 12th October 1917. He was 29 years old. He is buried at Tyne Cot cemetery nearby. It is unlikely he was ever aware that he was awarded the Victoria Cross for his bravery.

McGee's Victoria Cross is currently held by the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston. The Sergeants' Mess at Anglesea Army Barracks, Hobart, is named the McGee Club in his honour.



Sergeant John Dwyer

Unit: 4th Machine Gun Company, 4th Brigade, 4th Division
Date & Place of Action: 26th September 1917, Zonnebeke, Belgium.

John Dwyer was born at Lovett, Tasmania, on 9th March 1890, but spent most of his childhood on Bruny Island, attending the local school. After finishing school, Dwyer worked as a labourer in Queenstown, from where he enlisted on 4th February 1915.

Dwyer was posted to the 15th Battalion, joining it in August 1915 at Gallipoli. He remained at Gallipoli until transferred to the 4th Machine Gun Company on 15th March 1916, and was relocated shortly before the 4th Division moved to France. In France Dwyer was appointed a lance corporal in December, and then promoted to temporary corporal, and later, temporary sergeant. However, he lost his temporary rank after being wounded during the battle of Messines on 9th June 1917.

In August Dwyer rejoined his unit, and in September earned the Victoria Cross for the following actions at the battle of Polygon Wood:

"Dwyer, in charge of a Vickers machine gun, had gone forward with the first wave of his brigade. When the final objective was reached Dwyer rushed his gun forward to obtain a commanding fire position. While he was advancing he noticed an enemy machine gun causing casualties on the right flank. He rushed forward and fired his Vickers at the enemy, putting the gun out of action and killing the crew. He then seized the gun and established both it and his Vickers on the right flank of the brigade and inflicted further casualties during the subsequent counter-attack. The next day, when the position was heavily shelled, he carefully moved the gun to different positions and when the Vickers was put out of action by shell fire he secured a reserve gun and very quickly had it operational".

In April 1918, Dwyer was appointed temporary regimental sergeant, in May was commissioned second lieutenant and three months later, was promoted to lieutenant. On 23rd January 1919, Dwyer was presented his Victoria Cross by King George V at Buckingham Palace.

Returning from war, Dwyer married and became involved in local government, serving as a councillor in the Bruny Island municipality. He also established a sawmilling business. In May 1931, Dwyer was elected to the Tasmanian House of Assembly as an ALP member for the seat of Franklin, which he held until his death in 1962. He held such portfolios as Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Premier.

Captain Percy Cherry

Unit: 26th Battalion, 7th Brigade, 2nd Division
Date & Place of Action: 26th March 1917, Lagnicourt, France.

Percy Cherry was born on 4th June, 1895, in Drysdale, Victoria, where he lived until he was seven, when his parents took up an apple farm at Cradoc, Tasmania. Upon finishing his education, Cherry worked for his father, becoming an expert apple packer, and at fourteen, won the case making championships at the Launceston fruit show.

In 1913, Cherry was commissioned in the 93rd Infantry Regiment. On 5th March 1915, Cherry enlisted with the AIF and was posted to the 26th Battalion. Although a trained infantry officer, Cherry was considered too young for an AIF appointment, and was instead sent to Egypt as a quartermaster sergeant in June 1915. In August, Cherry was made a company sergeant, and in September arrived at Gallipoli where he fought at Taylor's Hollow and Russell's Top. He was wounded just before the evacuation of 1st December. A week later he was promoted to second lieutenant.

In 1916 Cherry was transferred to the 7th Machine Gun Company and sent to France, where he commanded the company's 1st Battery at Armentieres and Messines and on the Somme until he was wounded on 5th August following a duel with a German officer at Pozieres. In this remarkable incident, Cherry promised the dying German officer that his letters would be passed on to his family in Germany. In September he was made temporary captain and again transferred to the 26th Battalion as company commander. His rank was confirmed on 14th February 1917. On 3rd March Cherry led his company in an attack on Malt Trench, where he captured two machine gun posts. For this Cherry was awarded the Military Cross. In the same month, (26th March, 1917) Cherry performed the following act for which he earned his Victoria Cross:

"Cherry's battalion was ordered to storm the village of Lagnicourt. His company encountered fierce opposition and when all the other officers had been killed or wounded, he led his men forward and cleared the enemy from the village. At one stage a stoutly defended crater temporarily checked the attackers. Cherry sent for mortars but before they were brought down on the crater Cherry rushed the position under Lewis gun and rifle grenade cover. After the crater was taken, Cherry and his party pushed through the village. Sensing the possibility of counter-attacks, he kept his party in position to strengthen the sector. The Germans did counter-attack and the battle raged all day long. Next day the Germans shelled the Australian positions killing Cherry among others."

Cherry's service medals are displayed in the Australian War Memorial.

Sergeant John Whittle

Unit: 12th Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 1st Division
Date & Place of Action: 8th and 15th April 1917, Boursies and Lagnicourt, France.

John Whittle was born on 3rd August, 1883, on Huon Island, Tasmania. Whittle enlisted with the Fourth (Second Imperial Bushmen) Contingent who he joined in South Africa on 27th March 1901 to participate in the Anglo-Boer War.

Whittle returned to Australia on 25th June 1902. Shortly after, he enlisted with the Royal Navy where he served five years on several ships as a stoker. After completing his Navy service, Whittle rejoined the army, serving in the Army Services Corps, the 31st Battery and the Tasmanian Rifle Regiment.

Whittle enlisted with the AIF on 6th August 1915, joining the 26th Battalion as a reinforcement. On reaching Egypt he was reallotted to the 12th Battalion. He was promoted to corporal on 14th March 1916. A month after arriving in France, Whittle was again promoted, to lance sergeant. On 18th July, Whittle was injured, returning to his Unit in October. He was promoted to sergeant on 14th October 1916.

In February of 1917 Whittle earned the Distinguished Conduct Medal for bombing the enemy out of their trenches at the advance of Bapaume. Whittle was with fellow VC recipient Captain James Newland when he was wounded.

Whittle earned his Victoria Cross at the same time as Captain Newland, on the Bapaume-Cambrai road, outside of Boursies, and at Lagnicourt during the initial advances of Newlands A Company from 8th to 15th April 1917.

"After a successful bombing assault on a ruined mill, Whittle was placed in command of a post just beyond it. Around 10pm the Germans counter-attacked and succeeded in entering the small trench Whittle was holding. Whittle quickly reorganised his men, charged the enemy and restabilised the position. Captain Newland then arrived and the two worked together until the line was re-established. Newland, under attack from three directions, withdrew his men to a sunken road and lined them out in defence along both banks. Just as this move was completed, Whittle, who had seen some Germans moving a machine gun into a position which offered a commanding arc of fire, jumped to his feet and charged the enemy gun crew. He killed the whole crew and then carried the machine gun back to the Australian positions. Newland then consolidated the position and when reinforcements from the 9th Battalion arrived a counter-attack was executed and all positions were regained."

Following the war, Whittle assisted in the Australian Army recruiting program. For many years he worked as an inspector with a major insurer in Sydney.

Corporal Walter Brown

Unit: 20th Battalion, 5th Brigade, 2nd Division
Date & Place of Action: 6th July 1918, Villers-Bretonneux, France.

'Wally' Brown was born 3rd July, 1885, and spent his early years in New Norfolk, Tasmania. After leaving school, Brown worked as a grocer in Hobart until moving to Petershan, New South Wales, enlisting with the AIF on 26th July 1915.

Brown left for Egypt in October, joining the 1st Light Horse Regiment on 14th January 1915. In Egypt, Brown made up a story that he had lost his false teeth so that he could be sent to Cairo, where he transferred to the 20th Battalion reinforcements. On 30th September 1916, Brown left for France where he spent a month serving with the 55th Battalion, followed by six months service with the Australian Field Butcheries. He joined the 20th Battalion at St Omar on 8th of August 1917.

In September and October of 1917, Brown served at Passchendaele, for which he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for aiding his fellow wounded soldiers under heavy fire, and after his sergeant was disabled, taking charge of his section. In April, 1918, Brown was promoted to corporal and the 2nd Division moved from Flanders to Dernancourt, engaging in penetration tactics against the Germans, gaining ground, little by little. In July, 1918, the 2nd Division had reached the Somme, and for the following actions, Brown was awarded the Victoria Cross:

"Brown was with an advance party which took over some newly captured trenches near Accroche Wood and, on being told that a sniper's post was causing trouble, he located the enemy strong point, picked up two Mills bombs and ran towards it under fire. His first bomb fell short, but on reaching the post he knocked one German down with his fist and threatened the others with the remaining Mills bomb. The whole party, consisting of one officer and twelve men of 137th Infantry Regiment, surrendered and Brown shepherded them back to the Australian lines".

He re-enlisted in World War 2, giving his age as 39 (instead of 54). On 15th February 1942 in Singapore, which was about to be surrendered to the Japanese, he was last seen a few hours before the surrender with some grenades, walking towards the enemy saying: 'No surrender for me.' He may have reached Sumatra, but his body was never recovered. His medals, along with the machine gun he captured, are displayed at the Australian War Memorial's Hall of Valour.

Tasmanian Victoria Cross Memorial

On 11th May 2003 a memorial honouring Tasmania's 13 Victoria Cross recipients was unveiled at the Cenotaph on the Domain in Hobart by then Governor of Tasmania, Sir Guy Green, in the presence of then Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Danna Vale, Premier of Tasmania, Jim Bacon and Hobart Lord Mayor Rob Valentine.

The idea of a single memorial dedicated to all of Tasmania's recipients of the Commonwealth's highest award for valour had been considered by the Tasmanian Branch of the RSL more than two years earlier. The Tasmanian RSL lobbied for the project which eventuated in a joint funding initiative from all levels of government, with the Australian Government contributing $130,000 and the State Government and Hobart City Council each contributing an additional $50,000.

The memorial (pictured above) is designed to include soil from the birthplaces of all 13 Tasmanian VC recipients, as well as soil from the battlefields of France, Belgium and South Africa.

The rammed earth design of the memorial represents the trenches occupied by the early diggers, and also features sound scape providing information on all the recipients so that they may be remembered and commemorated by future generations.

The Australian War Memorial

The Australian War Memorial in Canberra is recognised as one of the world's great national monuments. The grand monument houses vast national collections of relics, personal and public records and art and media to relate the story of Australia's experience at war, as well as the nation's involvement in regional conflict.

The Memorial endeavours to have only authentic memorabilia, ranging from the relics of war, to military medals. The Memorial includes a roll of honour, made of brass, and featuring the name of every Australian who has died in conflict since the Boer War. The Roll of Honour stands several metres high and is more than 70 metres in length.

It includes the towering "Hall of Memory" a high dome clad structure within which lies the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, whose remains were repatriated to Australia from the battlefields of Europe.

The Memorial includes a tribute to the 96 servicemen who won the Victoria Cross for Valour while featuring commemorative tributes to many Australians who distinguished themselves in war.

(Right) The high dome housing the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, flanked by the Roll of Honour. At centre is the Pool of Reflection which supports a flame that is never extinguished.

Australian Involvement in Twentieth Century Wars

World War I "The Great War To End All Wars" (1914–1918)

Worldwide military casualties: 8,000,000, civilian casualties 6,500,000; total 14,500,000.

More than a hundred years ago Europe was dominated by five major powers: Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia. It was the age of empires and these powers competed with each other for influence and control both within Europe and elsewhere.

By 1910 disputes and suspicions had led these nations to form two opposing camps: Britain, France and Russia on one hand as the Triple Entente and Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy on the other as the Triple Alliance. The Ottoman Empire, Turkey, also supported the Triple Alliance against the Russians.

By the summer of 1914 Europe was a volatile mix of simmering tensions and interwoven alliances. The immediate spark that ignited World War I came from the pistol of a young Serbian student who assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austrian throne, in the streets of Sarajevo on 28 June 1914. This incident provoked Austria into war with Serbia so it could finally cement its power over the Balkans. Russia responded with a call to arms against Austria and so triggered the alliances that would plunge all of Europe into conflict.

When German forces marched into Belgium to deliver their first attack against France, they violated Belgian neutrality and so provoked Britain to declare war on 4 August 1914. All the major powers of Europe and all their far-flung empires were now at war. It was truly the first World War, 'the war to end all wars'.

As part of the British Empire, Australia immediately joined the conflict to support Britain. Prime Minister Andrew Fisher had declared in July that 'Australia will stand behind the Mother country to help defend her to the last man and the last shilling'. His words reflected the enthusiasm of most Australians for the war. Most people believed it would be a brief conflict that would be over by Christmas.

Thousands of Australian men volunteered for service. The first units of the AIF were formed and combined with New Zealanders to make the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, hence the acronym ANZAC. After some initial training in Egypt, the Australians and New Zealanders saw their first action with the landing on the beaches at Gallipoli in Turkey on 25 April 1915. After this they became known as 'Anzacs'. The reports of their courage, sacrifice, ingenuity, independence, mateship and perseverance in the face of overwhelming odds generated a new sense of national identity and national pride. The Anzac legend was born.

World War II (1939–1945)

Worldwide military casualties: 19,000,000; civilian 37,000,000; total 56,000,000.

The peace that came after World War I was an uneasy peace that ironically helped sew the seeds for another major war only 20 years later.

The German invasion of Poland in September 1939 and the Japanese attacks on Malaya and Pearl Harbour in December 1941 were the immediate causes of World War II. However, the underlying causes were the emergence in the economic instability of the 1920s of fascist movements in Italy and Germany which consolidated power during the Depression of the 1930s. Resentment of the Treaty of Versailles, especially the *Guilt Clause* and the Great Depression saw the Nazi party led by Adolf Hitler take power. Hitler denounced the Treaty of Versailles and undertook to reclaim lost territories.

Italy and Japan had also developed strong nationalist governments that sought to expand their territories. Italy pushed into North Africa, and Japan invaded China in 1936. Despite attempts by Britain to appease German demands for more territory in Europe, World War II broke out in September 1939 when Germany invaded Poland. Australia, as part of the British Empire, entered World War II immediately as a consequence of Britain's involvement. Australian men and women initially served in Europe, North Africa and the Mediterranean.

Japan entered the war in December 1941 when it attacked the US fleet at Pearl Harbour in Hawaii and started to invade countries in south-east Asia. In a rapid four-month campaign, Japan captured Malaya, Singapore, Burma, and the Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia) and parts of New Guinea. For the first time in the nation's history, Australia was also forced to defend its own territory when it came under direct Japanese attack. Japanese planes bombed Darwin and other places in 1942 and 1943 and Japanese midget submarines entered Sydney Harbour in May 1942. The struggle against the Japanese in the jungles of Papua and New Guinea was also seen as a battle for Australia's own defence.

The allied armies secured the total surrender of Germany on May 8, 1945 and then the surrender of Japan in the Pacific on August 15, 1945 after the United States dropped the world's first atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Korean War (1950–1953)

Worldwide military casualties: 1,672,000, civilian 2,828,000; total 4,500,000.

At the end of World War II the world became increasingly divided into two hostile groups. On one side were the communist countries like Soviet Russia and China; on the other the Western powers such as Britain, France and the United States. Despite the creation of the United Nations to prevent conflict, a 'Cold War' began between these two blocks. In an early Cold War struggle, Australian troops, ships and aircraft joined UN forces in 1950 to support South Korea against communist North Korea.

The Korean War began on 25 June 1950 when the army from communist North Korea invaded the Republic of South Korea. Korea had been artificially divided by Russia and the USA at the end of World War II. The 1950 hostilities came as a result of the desire for reunification, Cold War tensions and communist plans for the overthrow of what the communists called "western imperialism." The UN Security Council declared North Korea's invasion an act of aggression and called on member countries to send forces to restore order. Australia was among the first countries to commit military forces to the UN command, led by the United States of America. In the first months of the war the North Koreans were decisively pushed back.

The war escalated when communist China sided with North Korea in October 1950 and drove the UN forces back south. A stalemate developed, which lasted until July 1953 when a fragile armistice was finally agreed. In 2006 Korea remains divided into the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (South Korea). An unstable and unpredictable North Korean leadership has recently intimidated neighbouring countries with provocative "test" missile launches. The South Korean Army is ever vigilant against renewed attacks from North Korea. The US continues to have a presence in South Korea.

Australian forces – including a squadron of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), a regiment of the Australian Army and Royal Australian Navy support ships arrived in South Korea in September 1950. By the end of the war three years later, 339 Australians had died, more than 1,200 had been wounded and 29 taken prisoner of war.

Vietnam War (1962–1973)

Worldwide military deaths 1,158,000, civilian 1,200,000, total 2,358,000

The 'Cold War' affected much of Eastern Asia. During World War II the Japanese occupied Vietnam, and after the war the French tried to reimpose colonial rule, but by 1954 were driven out by the Vietnamese. The United States intervened and with other Western nations split Vietnam into a communist north and a pro-Western south. The United States then supported the South Vietnamese Government with military aid to prevent a communist takeover.

The same "containment" strategy which was applied in the Korean conflict was applied again with regard to Vietnam. This was based on the "domino theory", based on fears that if one country fell to communism others would follow.

In 1962 Australia entered what was to become the longest conflict in the nation's military history. Australian troops were first sent to South Vietnam to help train the South Vietnamese army. Over time, Australia committed further ground troops to support the South Vietnamese and American forces who were fighting against the armies of North Vietnam and the guerrilla forces of the Viet Cong, the communist rebels operating within South Vietnam. Australia's commitment to the Vietnam War lasted until 1973. Australia first supported South Vietnam by sending 30 military advisers in July–August 1962. Australia's commitment in Vietnam gradually increased during the 1960s and the Government decided to introduce recruitment by conscription. In 1964 selective conscription was introduced, with conscripts chosen by ballot.

After a period of gradual disengagement from the conflict, when operations were increasingly returned to the South Vietnamese forces, the last Australian troops were withdrawn from Vietnam in 1973. During the war more than 50,000 Australians served in the army, air force and navy. Of these, 520 were killed and nearly 2,400 were wounded. The United States suffered more than 50,000 deaths.

In April 1975 South Vietnamese resistance finally collapsed and North Vietnamese troops occupied Saigon (now called Ho Chi Minh City).

World wide civilian casualties of major conflicts ranging from Boer War to Vietnam War: 48,000,000; military casualties: 30,000,000; total: 78,000,000

Glossary

Aide-de-Camp
(French for *camp assistant*) a personal assistant or secretary to a person of high rank, usually a senior military officer or a head of state.

AIF
Australian Imperial Forces, the two all-volunteer Australian Army forces dispatched to fight overseas during World War I and World War II.

Battalion
An army unit having two or more companies etc. and a headquarters.

Boer
Word used to describe farmers of European origin (primarily Dutch and German) who migrated further into the African continent following British settlement on the South African Cape.

Colonel
Rank just below brigadier. Typically serving as staff officers in between field commands at battalion and brigade level. The insignia is two diamond shaped pips (properly called stars) and a crown.

Company
A division of a battalion.

Corporal
The second lowest of the non-commissioned officer ranks, ranked between lance corporal and sergeant. The badge of rank is a two-bar chevron (also known as "stripes", "tapes" or "hooks").

Garrison
A body of troops stationed in a fort or fortified town, or, a fortified place, in which troops are quartered for its security.

Infantry
Soldiers who fight primarily on foot with small arms in organized military units, though they may be transported to the battlefield by horses, ships or other means.

Lance Corporal
Lowest ranking non-commissioned officer, between private and corporal. The badge of rank is a 1-bar chevron

Lieutenant Colonel
Rank superior to major and subordinate to colonel. It is pronounced "Left-Tenant" by Commonwealth forces. The insignia is a crown above a pip.

Lewis Guns
American design of machine gun most widely used by the British Empire during World War I.

Major
Rank above captain and below lieutenant colonel. The rank insignia for a major is a crown.

Maltese Cross
A cross having four equal arms resembling arrowheads joined at the points.

Maxim Gun
First self-powered machine gun. The Maxim used energy from the ammunition it fired instead of a crank. However, the Maxim was large and difficult to manouver.

Militia
An army of trained civilians, which may be an official reserve army, called upon in time of need.

Parapet
A defensive wall or elevation used in fortification.

Pillbox
Low, concrete structure, enclosing a machine gun during warfare.

Platoon
Military unit consisting of two or more sections, making up a company.

Sniper
Person firing shots over a long distance from a concealed location.

Trooper
A cavalry soldier of private rank, or, a member of a troop. This rank is used in British, Australian and Canadian armoured branches of service.

Vickers Gun
An improved version of the Maxim gun. At the beginning of World War I the Vickers was the official machine gun of the British Army.

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This publication was produced with the support and assistance of RSL Tasmania.

Lt Col Harry Murray's clan: Senator Barnett is flanked on his left by Lt Col Harry Murray's son Doug, and on his right Chairman of the Murray Memorial Committee, Lt Col (Ret) David von Stieglitz. Lt Col Murray's daughter, Clem, is seated at centre front.

Some photographs in this publication courtesy of the Australian War Memorial. Some information in the booklet courtesy of the Australian War Memorial and the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Additional Information:

Australian War Memorial:
GPO Box 345
CANBERRA ACT 2601
www.awm.gov.au

Department of Veterans' Affairs – Education Resources:
www.dva.gov.au/commem/commac/studies/studies.htm

Australians at War:
www.australiansatwar.gov.au

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Prepared with the assistance of RSL Tasmania